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Item 112 (c) of the provisional agenda*

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Letter dated 5 August 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a memorandum on the situation of the population of foreign origin in Estonia (see annex). This document is Estonia's response to the memorandum circulated at the request of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations as document A/51/189.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 112 (c) of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Tiina INTELMANN
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* A/51/150.

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ANNEX

Memorandum dated 31 July 1996 from the Republic of Estonia on the situation of the population of foreign origin in Estonia

1. The Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs once again reiterates its commitment to abide by international requirements on human rights and would like to provide a detailed reply, based on facts, to the document presented by the Russian Federation.

2. The document in question had previously been distributed within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, regional organizations that, owing to their impartial monitoring activities, are well aware of the current situation in Estonia. These organizations did not find it necessary to discuss this document, as they recognized the political motivations behind the document, its inaccuracies and its disregard of facts.

3. The claim that "the situation of the Russian-speaking population ... is tending to deteriorate" is groundless as suggested by the reports of independent observers such as local embassies, the OSCE mission to Estonia and other international experts, whose findings indicated an opposite trend.

4. To date all 330,000 applications for residence permits have been reviewed and a favourable decision has been granted to the overall majority of applicants. Less than 100 persons have been denied residency and in about 3,000 cases the review process has been extended because the documents were incomplete upon submission.

5. The Government of Estonia has repeatedly notified and confirmed to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that for those persons who have yet to receive an alien's passport, the internal identity cards of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) may remain as a valid personal identification document within Estonia.

6. The internal identity card of the former USSR was never recognized as an international travel document nor was it ever meant to be one. Estonia has assisted the free movement of aliens through the distribution of temporary travel documents (these documents have also been distributed to Russian citizens to whom the Russian Federation has not provided travel documents). Major problems concerning the issuing and use of temporary travel documents have not been registered.

7. The issuing of aliens' passports is hindered by the fact that Estonia's repeated request for a listing of Russian citizens residing in Estonia has been rejected, despite calls by the Council of Europe and OSCE to submit such a list. The Russian Federation is responsible for providing its citizens with proper identity documents and passports. According to the numbers in the document distributed by the Russian Federation, the Russian Federation has failed to

issue passports or identity papers to approximately half of its citizens residing in Estonia.

8. In the elections for local self-government, everyone who was granted a residence permit and has lived for five years in the locality of the local government holding elections has the right to vote, regardless of whether the person has an alien's passport or physically possess a residence permit. The right of non-citizens to participate in the elections for local self-government is a sign of Estonia's goodwill, since it is granted to non-citizens in very few countries.

9. No travel restrictions have been planned for or placed on residents of the Narva-Ivangord region, who have enjoyed, since the restoration of Estonian independence, special simplified border crossing procedures. Border crossing points have been provided with a database containing the names of all persons who have been granted an Estonian residence permit. These individuals can cross the administrative border between Estonia and the Russian Federation without any hindrance.

10. About 9,300 decommissioned Russian military personnel and about 10,000 family members of the Russian armed forces have submitted applications for residence permits. An Estonian government commission, with the participation of an OSCE representative, completed on schedule the review of all applicants on 12 July 1996. Despite their belonging to a former occupying force in Estonia, residence permits were denied only to 9 ex-military persons, while short-term permits were provided to approximately 4,000 intelligence officers and pensioners in their 40s and 50s.

11. The charge that Estonia is seeking to establish a mono-ethnic State is groundless in view of the fact that more than 330,000 settlers brought into Estonia by the Soviet authorities were granted residence permits and were guaranteed the right to privatize their residence at a minimal cost. Estonia has thus provided both the legal and economic means for their continued stay in Estonia.

12. Estonia has never been, nor does it seek to be, a mono-ethnic State. Estonia has put into force the Law on Aliens, which provides aliens the right to remain in Estonia; the Law on Citizenship, which gives aliens residing in Estonia the right to apply immediately for citizenship; the Law on Cultural Autonomy, which provides minorities the right to preserve their language and culture; and the Law on Local Elections, which provides aliens the right to participate in local elections. Within the Estonian Parliament, the Russian faction continues to work actively. In the Republic of Estonia, there are no laws that place discriminatory restrictions on the basis of ethnicity, language, religion or culture. Estonia has also ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, through which all Estonian residents have the opportunity to raise human rights concerns with the European Human Rights Commission and Court in Strasbourg. Laws that concern aliens - the Law on Aliens, the Law on Citizenship and the Language Law - were drafted with the help of international experts and have been fully reviewed by experts from the Council of Europe.

13. It is not the case that Estonia hindered the establishment of additional voting stations for the presidential elections of the Russian Federation. Accommodating the requests of the Russian Government, three additional polling stations were approved. One additional voting station was allowed to open at Tallinn. As the Russian Embassy opened a consular office in Tartu, Estonia allowed elections to proceed through that office and through the future office of the Russian Consulate at Narva. The latter was, for technical reasons, placed temporarily under the jurisdiction of diplomatic representatives. The Russian representative to OSCE, Ambassador Shustov, announced to the OSCE Permanent Council on 9 May 1996 that after permission had been granted to establish a voting station at Tartu, the situation was acceptable. The Russian Embassy at Tallinn also expressed its satisfaction with the number of additional voting stations permitted.

14. Finally, we would like to draw attention to the language within the document distributed by the Russian Federation which does not even once name the Republic of Estonia or the Government of Estonia but rather uses Soviet terms such as "authorities in Tallinn" or simply "Tallinn".

15. Estonia hopes that the United Nations members will be persuaded by the actual situation in Estonia, as reported by independent observers, and will not be misled by politically motivated allegations when making their assessment of the situation in Estonia.

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Fifty-first session
Item 33 of the provisional agenda*
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Letter dated 6 August 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government and further to our earlier letters concerning Israel's repeated attacks on southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa and the arbitrary practices against the local inhabitants in which it engages on a daily basis, I have the honour to notify you of the series of such incidents that took place in the first half of July 1996.

1 July 1996

At 0900 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Iqlim al-Tuffah area and carried out mock attacks.

2 July 1996

At 1015 hours the town of Yanta, Wadi al-Aswad locality, Rashayya district, came under Israeli attack. It was targeted at long range by three rockets, and property damage was sustained.

At 1030 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the western Bekaa area.

3 July 1996

At 1200 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Sidon area and the neighbouring camps at medium altitudes.

* A/51/150.

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4 July 1996

At 2145 hours Abu Rashid hill, outside Maydun, came under intermittent artillery fire from Israeli positions.

5 July 1996

At 1145 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Iqlim al-Tuffah area at low altitudes.

At 1200 hours outlying areas of Arab Salim and Luwayzah and areas along the Nab' al-Tasah spring came under Israeli artillery fire.

7 July 1996

At 1415 hours Israeli warplanes overflew the Tyre area at high altitudes.

8 July 1996

At 2000 hours the Mlita and Jabal Safi hills, outlying areas of Arab Salim, Jarju' and Ayn Bu Siwar, and areas along the Nab' al-Tasah spring came under Israeli artillery fire.

10 July 1996

At 0940 hours Tibnin and outlying areas of Ayta al-Jabal and Haddatha came under Israeli artillery fire. Two fragmentation shells fell alongside the headquarters of the Irish battalion of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in Tibnin.

13 July 1996

At 1530 hours outlying areas of Jba', Wadi Kafra-Jba' and Kafr Fila, the highway in the area and the Mlita and Jabal Safi hills came under Israeli artillery fire. The shelling extended to outlying areas of Jarju' and Ayn Bu Siwar and the outskirts of Luwayzah and Jba'.

15 July 1996

At 0845 hours outlying areas of Majdal Zun in Tyre district came under Israeli artillery fire.

Israel's persistent refusal to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and its continued occupation of Lebanese territory are perpetuating the cycle of violence.

The Lebanese Government strongly condemns the continued Israeli occupation and these fresh attacks and arbitrary practices inflicted on the Lebanese population, which have caused further serious damage to property. Like previous attacks, this new series is in flagrant violation of the sovereignty and

independence of Lebanon and constitutes a breach of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, of international law and of basic human rights.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 33 of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Samir MOUBARAK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative